FBK | ISR
CENTRE FOR
RELIGIOUS STUDIES

**FONDAZIONE
BRUNO KESSLER**

Religion and Innovation

*Innovation in Religion:
how innovation is understood
and experienced within religious
traditions and communities
of faith or belief*

*Religion in Innovation:
how religious traditions and
communities of faith
or belief contribute to innovation*

*The Religion of Innovation:
how innovation turns into a belief
system and becomes a sort of
religion per se*

Workshop and Lecture Series 2018

The goal of this workshop and lecture series is to explore an under-researched territory: the relations between today's religion (institutions, communities and community leaders, religious practices, beliefs and values) on the one hand, processes of innovation in various – partly overlapping – fields such as science, technology, politics, culture, the law, and religion itself, on the other.

The event series continues, consolidates and develops the research work on the multi-faceted relations between religion and innovation in contemporary societies that has been pursued by the Center for Religious Studies (ISR) of Fondazione Bruno Kessler since the adoption of the mission on religion & innovation in June 2016. The topics to be discussed and analysed cut across the four ISR research lines "Conflicts", "Values, Science and Technology", "Spirituality and Lifestyles", and "Texts, Doctrines and Traditions".

The workshop and lecture series will engage scholars of religious studies and researchers/practitioners in diverse fields of innovation in a sustained dialogue. Moreover, it will make ISR's work on religion & innovation accessible to a non-specialist audience through a series of dedicated lectures in Italian.

INNOVATION IN RELIGION

Values, Science and Technology

Texts, Doctrines and Traditions

Spirituality and Lifestyles

Conflicts

RELIGION IN INNOVATION

RELIGION OF INNOVATION
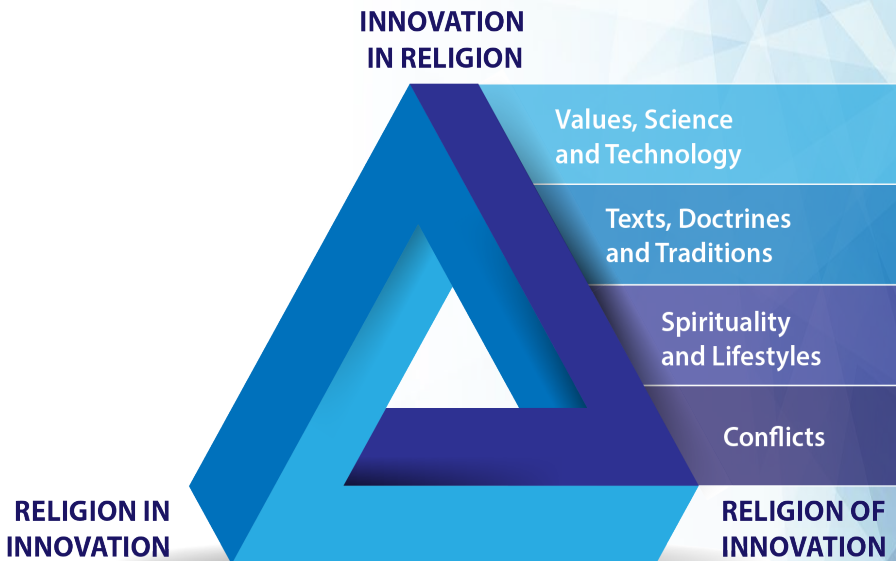
Following the distinction between three dimensions of religion & innovation discourses introduced in ISR's mission statement, the lectures and workshops intend to advance, and in some cases initiate, critical analyses and discussions of

- innovation in religion: how innovation is understood and experienced within religious traditions and communities of faith or belief (e.g., new religious movements, novel interpretations of sacred texts, novel forms of organising religious practices, new forms of religious leadership);

- religion in innovation: how religious traditions and communities of faith or belief contribute to innovation (e.g., religious communities as agents and drivers of innovation processes, religiously grounded values and beliefs as motivating factors in social innovation projects, the role of religious communities/actors in shaping research and development in the field of ICT);

- the religion of innovation: how innovation turns into a belief system and becomes a sort of religion itself (e.g., religious or quasi-religious attitudes towards new technologies and technological progress, the rhetoric of innovation discourses as compared to the rhetoric of religious discourses).

In an exploratory spirit, the workshop and lecture series will trace these three dimensions of "Religion & Innovation" within four thematic areas:

1. conceptual and normative underpinnings of religion & innovation discourses
2. religion, social innovation and cultural innovation
3. religion and innovation in science and technology
4. religion and innovation in politics and the law.

Moreover, a final conference (November 2018) will be dedicated to exploring the intersections between these various areas.

1 Thematic Area
Conceptual and normative underpinnings of religion & innovation discourses

Characterising a project, process or result X as innovative often (though not always) implies an attitude of appreciation or endorsement of X as good (or as an improvement), as desirable or as useful. Good, desirable or useful for whom? On what grounds and value assumptions? And in view of which goals? This thematic area aims to advance a critical understanding of today's innovation discourses through an examination of their (often tacit) conceptual and normative presuppositions and underpinnings.

Among the questions to be addressed:

- How did the term "innovation" make it into contemporary narratives concerning research and technology development, as well as into the vocabulary used in today's political discourses?

- How to understand the conceptual history of today's innovation discourses?

- What is/has been the role of the European Commission in mainstreaming innovation-talk into research agendas across Europe?

- What are the normative or value assumptions that stand behind specific conceptions of the relationship between innovation and religion in the fields of social organisation, politics and the law, culture, technology, and research?

2 Thematic Area
Religion, social innovation, and cultural innovation

The aim of this section is to understand whether – and if so, how – different communities of faith or belief are involved in significant social and/or cultural innovation processes across Europe, and in which areas of social and/or cultural innovation those communities might play an active role in the future. The impact of cultural and social innovation on communities of faith or belief will also be paid special attention. In a preliminary fashion, we here use the expression "social innovation" in a broad sense that covers processes which (a) develop and implement new solutions to societal challenges, or new responses to (unmet) societal needs, and (b) result in an improvement, in terms of societal benefit, of the status ex ante – typically (but not necessarily) through a bottom-up approach that actively involves the relevant stakeholder groups. With the expression "cultural innovation", by contrast, we here intend to cover the field of novel developments in cultural heritage management as well as broader issues pertaining to intercultural and interreligious exchange and co-creation.

Among the topics to be addressed in this thematic section:

- case studies of social and/or cultural innovation initiatives driven by religious communities,
- communities of faith or belief as stakeholders in social and/or cultural innovation processes,
- religious beliefs and religiously grounded values as motivating factors in social and/or cultural innovation initiatives,
- examples of innovative measures for accommodating religious diversity in urban, institutional and social spaces (e.g., innovative architectures of meditation/prayer rooms, multifaith spaces).

3 Thematic Area
Religion and innovation in science and technology

This thematic section will focus on the relation between today's religions and innovations in the fields of science and technology. On the one hand, its aim will be to analyse how the emergence and take-up of scientific results and new technologies induce change within traditional religious communities and/ or enable the creation of new religious movements. On the other hand, it will serve to understand the role of religious (individual or group) agents, and of the shifting constellations of religious diversity in contemporary societies, in driving technological innovation processes. Particular attention will be paid to artificial intelligence (AI), which constitutes the strategic research focus of Fondazione Bruno Kessler for the year 2018, as well as to innovations in the fields of new media, human enhancement, medical/health and biotechnologies.

Among the questions to be addressed:

- How does the take-up of innovations in the field of ICT by religious communities change religious practices?

- To what extent is it theoretically justified and useful to describe these changes as ICT-enabled or even ICT-driven innovations within religious practices?

- Vice versa, how are needs arising from social/demographic change (growing religious diversification within societies, due to migration) being met by technology R&D, thus having an influence on the directions of technological R&D?

- How are religious spaces, communities and practices being represented in digital environments (e.g., in VR and game environments)?

- How do different religious communities and institutions position themselves with regard to technological innovations, and on what grounds?

- To what extent do contemporary techno-futurist discourses draw upon religious imagery and vocabulary (e.g., the idea – widespread among adherents of the transhumanist movement – that technological progress will bring salvation)?

- To what extent is it theoretically justified and useful to describe contemporary techno-utopian discourses in terms of a religion of innovation?

4 Thematic Area
Religion and innovation in politics and the law

Religious practices are currently reacquiring a central role in identity-making processes that produce individual and collective subjectivities. At the same time, international migration calls for increased reflection on the political and legal accommodation of identity issues in migrant-receiving countries. These dynamics deeply challenge consolidated understandings of democracy, the public sphere, collective/individual rights, common/private goods, etc.

This thematic area aims to discuss the innovative potential of ideas that respond to particularly controversial issues related to religious diversity governance. The contributions will analyse solution attempts that have been experimented in various societies, critically discussing them with a view to conceptions of innovation in the fields of politics and the law.

Particular attention will be paid to how EU policies in the field of innovation, on the one hand, and in the field of religious diversity governance (e.g., freedom of religion or belief, and interreligious dialogue), on the other, relate to each other.

Among the topics and questions:

- To what extent do approaches inspired by the ideas of legal pluralism, religious arbitration, self-regulation of religious communities, and interlegality represent innovative answers to the challenges posed by global migration and religious diversity?

- Can the public/private dichotomy be overcome in order to really understand the new place of religion and religious practices in people's lives? Should religious practices be considered as constituting spaces that are protected by individual rights, and in particular by property rights? Or is religion a setting where new, alternative models of non-state privateness or publicness are performed and new communal bonds are produced?

- Are the European Union's innovation policies sensitive to issues arising from the growing religious diversity in EU member states?

Calendar

date	25-26 January 2018
title	**Conceptual and Normative Underpinnings of Religion & Innovation Discourses**
type	Opening Conference
research lines	Conflicts; Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology; Texts, Doctrines and Traditions

date	5-6 February 2018
title	**Religion and Video Games**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion and Innovation in Science and Technology
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology

date	4-5 April 2018
title	**New Spaces and Architectures of the Sacred**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion, Social Innovation, and Cultural Innovation
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Texts, Doctrines and Traditions; Conflicts

date	17-18 May 2018
title	**Digital Religion & New Media**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion and Innovation in Science and Technology
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology

date	21-22 June 2018
title	**Religious Diversity and Social Innovation**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion, Social Innovation, and Cultural Innovation
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Conflicts

date	September 2018
title	**Innovating States and Communities**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion and Innovation in Politics and the Law
research line	Conflicts

date	12-13 September 2018
title	**The Conceptual History of Innovation Discourses**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Conceptual and Normative Underpinnings of Religion & Innovation Discourses
research lines	Conflicts; Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology; Texts, Doctrines, and Traditions

date	October 2018
title	**Technological and Financial Innovation in the Film Industry: The Religious Factor**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion, Social Innovation, and Cultural Innovation
research lines	Values, Science, and Technology; Spirituality and Lifestyles

date	October 2018
title	**Business, Finance, and Religion**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion, Social Innovation, and Cultural Innovation
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science and Technology

date	19-23 November 2018
title	**Artificial Intelligence and Religious Belief**
type	Workshop and Lectures
thematic area	Religion and Innovation in Science and Technology
research lines	Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology

date	26-30 November 2018
title	**Religion in the Innovation Landscape**
type	Final Conference
thematic area	Conceptual and Normative Underpinnings of Religion & Innovation Discourses; Religion, Social Innovation, and Cultural Innovation; Religion and Innovation in Science and Technology; Religion and Innovation in Politics and the Law
research lines	Conflicts; Spirituality and Lifestyles; Values, Science, and Technology; Texts, Doctrines, and Traditions

Confirmed Speakers

- *Matteo Bortolini*, University of Padua
- *Heidi Campbell*, Texas A&M University
- *Paul Chippendale*, Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Trento
- *Mariano Croce*, Sapienza University of Rome
- *Andrew Crompton*, University of Liverpool
- *Giulia Evolvi*, Ruhr University Bochum
- *Francesca Ferrando*, New York University
- *Benoît Godin*, Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Montreal
- *Vincenzo Idone Cassone*, University of Turin
- *Tobias Knoll*, University of Heidelberg
- *Massimo Leone*, University of Turin
- *Malin Lindberg*, Lulea University of Technology
- *Katia Malatesta*, Religion Today Festival
- *Marco Mazzaglia*, Synesthesia; Mixedbag Srl, Turin
- *Frank Moulaert*, KU Leuven
- *Federico Neresini*, University of Padua
- *Marc Parés,* Autonomous University of Barcelona
- *Riccardo Pozzo*, University of Verona
- *Kerstin Radde-Antweiler*, University of Bremen
- *Andrea Rota*, University of Fribourg
- *Jeroen Temperman*, Erasmus University Rotterdam
- *Mattia Thibault*, University of Turin